

Fall 8-15-2007

ENG 3706-001: Southern Literature

Christopher Hanlon
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2007



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hanlon, Christopher, "ENG 3706-001: Southern Literature" (2007). *Fall 2007*. 121.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2007/121

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2007 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2007 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

ENGLISH 3706: SOUTHERN LITERATURE

Dr. Christopher Hanlon *11-12*
 Office: Coleman 3811
 Office hours: Tu Th 10-11 & by appointment

Fall 2007
 Phone: 581.6302

Required Texts

William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*
 Charles Frazier, *Cold Mountain*
The Literature of the American South (Norton Anthology)
 Various items on Booth Library e-reserves

This course will be a study of literary culture in the Southern United States from the seventeenth to the twenty-first centuries, with special attention to the boundaries, achievements, myths, failings, and efficacy of "the South" as a cultural entity. Settings to include decrepit mansions, plantations both post- and antebellum, dividing lines of all sorts, the woods, the swamp, the garden, the front porch, Sweet Home Alabama, the backwoods, backwater, country roads, byways, highways, battlefields, MTV. Locals will include the miscegenated and unacknowledged sons of audacious and newly-landed would-be gentry; finely attenuated and swooning belles; ne'r-do-wells in the woods; cavaliers; sharecroppers; fugitive slaves; Klansmen; Northeastern presidential candidates with visions of confederate flags on pickups; metaphorical fowl.

The course is intended not only to familiarize students with the body of literature generally known as "Southern," but also to encourage you to examine critically the meaning of region in American culture generally, and also in your own life; to promote the study of the impact of geography, dialect, local history, regional affiliation, and regional antagonism as factors in the shaping of literary canons; and to identify anxieties over race, region, gender, and class as configured in various renditions of the South and to trace these configurations as they have permeated American culture more generally. As this is a course designed for those seeking a degree in English, the deployment of various critical methodologies (New Critical, feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic, queer, deconstructionist, post-colonial, etc., etc.) is appropriate and invited.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES:

Final Grades will be determined in accordance with this formula:

Essay #1	20%
Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	25%
Essay #2	25%
Participation	10%
	100%

Two major essays, the first approximately four-five pages or 1000-1250 words in length and the second approximately eight pages or 2000 words in length. The first paper is due on 14 October and requires you to write an historical analysis of some aspect of William Faulkner's *Absalom*,

Absalom! The final essay is due on 9 December and requires you to develop your own critically-informed argument on a work of your choosing. The first paper will not make use of secondary sources—it will be a close reading, just you and the text. The second, however, will be a full-fledged research paper that aligns itself with a particular critical methodology, calls upon relevant scholarship, and so on.

Two examinations to be held on in class on October 21 and during finals week (date and time to be announced). Each of these exams will consist of an objective section designed to assess the closeness of your reading, along with an essay section requiring you to write extended, well-crafted answers to pointed questions concerning the materials we study in class. The final exam will be cumulative.

Participation in discussion: I expect students to model strong class citizenship in this course, working hard to make our discussion run well. To make the discussion run well: (1) you should read, and as you read you should form ideas, draw connections, raise problems, and take notes; (2) you should plan on participating—at least making a comments or asking a question—every day; (3) you should be careful not to dominate discussion (i.e., those of you who are not shy should give other students an opening to participate), and you should participate with tact and civility (take other people's remarks and questions seriously, don't interrupt, respond courteously, etc.). The grade for participation will depend upon meeting all these criteria. I will tend to lavish encouragement on students who engage as strong class citizens. I will tend to become annoyed with students who never have anything to offer or who seem feckless.

One last note on participation: Participating well doesn't simply mean talking a lot—it means frequently making comments, and responses to the comments of others, showing that you are engaged in a process of careful, close reading. *Idle talk—the kind that simply does not indicate close engagement with the materials we'll be studying—does not help move the conversation forward, and hence does not qualify as participation.*

I want to be utterly clear about this: Good participation does *not* require you to come to class knowing all the "answers," but it does require you to understand certain things about the texts under discussion. For instance, one cannot participate competently if one does not understand the events that make up the plot of a work of fiction, the gist of a poem, or the literal argument of an essay. Many of the readings we will take on this semester will be difficult, and on some occasions you won't know quite what to make of what you've read. That's perfectly acceptable. But I *will* expect you to come to class after having *fought* to understand as much as possible. The key to success in this class will lie in your refusal to become frustrated when faced with difficult concepts—instead, become challenged.

If given, occasional reading quizzes will be brief, designed to encourage everyone to keep up with the reading, and will also help me to determine participation grades.

Attendance will be taken for each class. With three absences, students will be considered overcut. Overcutting may result in the reduction of the final course grade by a grade or more, depending upon frequency. In the case of an excused absence (as defined by ELU university-wide policy), your excuse must be made in writing, accompanied by the appropriate documentation, and given to me no later than the first class meeting following the absence. In no case may a student accumulate more than five absences, either excused or unexcused, and still pass the course – if illness or other extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than five classes, you should petition for a withdrawal.

One last word related to attendance: I ask that students who have not read the text on the day it is to be discussed not bother coming. Such students cannot contribute anything valuable to the discussion, and in any case it is dishonest for them to benefit from the efforts of others by listening in on their conversations. Always read the assigned materials carefully, but if for some reason you have not, don't bother showing up.

Students who habitually show up for class a few minutes after it's started should find a professor who's into that and take their course instead. This professor is insulted by it and reacts badly.

Late papers will be penalized for their lateness. If they are very late, they may not be accepted at all. I am not unbending in this policy in the case of extreme circumstances, but in order to be granted an extension, students must contact me, with a compelling case to make, at least two days before the paper's due date.

Academic honesty: Students are of course responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism, even if unknowing or accidental, can result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Please note the English Department's statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) – has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me to clarify. Also, please make a point of noting the following: I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this course. If I come to suspect misconduct of any kind, I will become dogged about rooting it out, and if my suspicions are confirmed, I will dispense appropriate penalties.

Students are responsible for reading all of the material on this syllabus on the date assigned whether or not the work is actually discussed on that date. Students are cautioned that many of the readings are lengthy. I urge you to begin these readings as soon as possible. Occasionally, I will pass out brief, photocopied materials not represented on the syllabus; these are to be read by the next class.

You are not welcome to e-mail me while you are a student in this course. When you have a question, problem, or concern, I want to sit down with you and talk for as long as you need. That's why I keep office hours. I also want to talk with you about interesting ideas you have this semester, just as I want to talk with you—personally—about the readings we take on. But too many students these days use e-mail as a way to avoid their professors, a practice I resist obstinately. When you need to communicate with me, attend my office hours, call me at my office (581.6302), or if it's very important and the other avenues have not worked, call me at home (348.6144). We'll talk.

Reading Schedule (items may be changed)

Week 1

- Tuesday 8/21: Introductions, course outline
- Thursday 8/23: William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 1
Sir Robert Filmer, selection from *Patriarcha* (e-reserves)
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act 1 (e-reserves)

Week 2

- Tuesday 8/28: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 2
Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, acts 2-5
- Thursday 8/30: Ebenezer Cook, from "The Sot-weed Factor" (LAS 21-27)
William Byrd, selections from *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1739-41* (e-reserves)

Week 3

- Tuesday 9/4: Thomas Jefferson, selections from *Notes on the State of Virginia* (LAS 41-54; also Query V in e-reserves)
Jefferson, "Grammar and the American Language" (e-reserves)
Phyllis Wheatley, "On Being Brought From Africa to America" (e-reserves)
- Thursday 9/6: William Byrd, from *History of the Dividing Line* (LAS 31-34)
John Pendleton Kennedy, selections from *Swallow Barn* (LAS 60-66)
William Gilmore Simms, "The Lazy Crow" (LAS 70-88)
Simms, poems in e-reserves
Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 3

Week 4

- Tuesday 9/11: Frederick Douglass, selections from *the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself* (LAS 171-220)
- Thursday 9/13: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 4
Mary Boykin Chesnut, selections from *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (LAS 222-234)

Week 5

- Tuesday 9/18: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (LAS 103-116)
Poe, "Hop-Frog" (e-reserves)
Poe, *The Raven* (e-reserves)
- Thursday 9/20: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 5
Poe, selections from *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*
(e-reserves)

Week 6

- Tuesday 9/25: Henry Timrod, "Ethnogenesis" (e-reserves)
Timrod, "The Cotton-boll" (e-reserves)
Timrod, "Literature in the South" (LAS 235-242)
Timrod, "The Unknown Dead" (LAS 242-243)
- Thursday 9/27: Anonymous, "The Difference of Race Between the Northern and Southern People" (e-reserves)
Anonymous, "Southern Civilization: or, the Norman in America" (e-reserves)
Absalom, Absalom!, chapter 6

Week 7

- Tuesday 10/2: Joel Chandler Harris, "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story" (LAS 289-290)
Harris, "Free Joe and the rest of the World" (LAS 290-99)
Charles Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine" (LAS 237-345)
- Thursday 10/4: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapters 7-8

Week 8

- Tuesday 10/9: Thomas Dixon, selections from *The Clansman* (e-reserves)
Kate Chopin, "Désirée's Baby" (LAS 301-305)
Thomas Nelson Page, "Marse Chan" (LAS 310-325)
- Thursday 10/11: *Absalom, Absalom!*, chapter 9

Week 9

Tuesday 10/16: In-class screening, selections from *The Birth of a Nation*
Faulkner, "That Evening Sun" (e-reserves)
Faulkner, "The Odor of Verbena" (LAS 447-467)
Essay #1 due

Thursday 10/18: **Midterm Examination**

Week 10

Tuesday 10/23: Southern music day: Scott Lutz visits class

Thursday 10/25: Charles Frazier, *Cold Mountain*, pp. 3-68
Allen Tate, "Ode to the Confederate Dead" (LAS 479-482)

Week 11

Tuesday 10/30: Erskine Caldwell, "Kneel to the Rising Sun" (e-reserves)
Richard Wright, "Big Boy Leaves Home" (e-reserves)
Ernest J. Gaines, "The Sky Is Gray" (LAS 887-908)

Thursday 11/1: Caroline Gordon, "The Last Day in the Field"
Cold Mountain, pp. 69-132

Week 12

Tuesday 11/6: The Southern Agrarians, "I'll Take My Stand: the South
and the Agrarian Tradition" (LAS 391-396)
John Crowe Ransom, read all the poems in the anthology

Thursday 11/8: *Cold Mountain*, pp. 133-202
Jean Toomer, *Cane* (LAS 425-431)

Week 13

Tuesday 11/13: Carson McCullers, from *The Member of the Wedding* (LAS 752-758)
Bobbie Ann Mason, "Shiloh" (LAS 958-968)
Doris Betts, "The Ugliest Pilgrim" (LAS 870-885)

Proposal for Final Paper due

Thursday 11/15: Lee Smith, "Between the Lines" (LAS 1002-1011)
Cold Mountain, pp. 203-83

Week 14

Thanksgiving Recess—no classes

Week 15

- Tuesday 11/27: Wendell Berry, "The Regional Motive" (LAS 934-937)
James Alan McPherson, "Why I Like Country Music" (LAS 984-995)
Nikki Giovanni, read all the poems in the anthology
David Sedaris, "Drama Bug" and "You Can't Kill The
Rooster" (e-reserves)
- Thursday 11/29: *Cold Mountain* pp. 284-356

Week 16

- Tuesday 12/4: Finish *Cold Mountain*
- Thursday 12/6: Flannery O'Connor, "Revelation" (LAS 818-832)
Review for final exam, final discussion
Final papers due